

VZCZCXRO0323  
OO RUEHROV RUEHTRO  
DE RUEHKH #1156 2880513  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 150513Z OCT 09  
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4557  
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE  
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE  
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA

UNCLAS KHARTOUM 001156

NSC FOR MGA VIN, LETIM  
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN  
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU  
GENEVA FOR NKYLOH  
UN ROME FOR HSPANOS  
NEW YORK FOR DMERCADO

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [EAID](#) [PREF](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [SMIG](#) [UN](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: Drought Threatens Livelihoods in North Darfur

¶1. (SBU) Summary: U.N. field staff predict that low rain levels recorded this year may trigger displacement, increase reliance on humanitarian assistance, and heighten inter-community competition for scarce water resources. End summary.

-----  
NO RAIN, NO HARVEST  
-----

¶2. (U) The 2009 rainy season started late compared to 2008. The North Darfur Food Security and Livelihood Working Group has reported temporally and spatially erratic rains. Although August is usually the peak period for rains, large areas of North Darfur reported prolonged dry spells with the exception of Kebkabiya and Liait localities. Below average rainfall was observed in areas near Malha, Mellit, Kutum, and El Fasher towns. Below average rains not only threaten cultivation, but also affect water table replenishment, access to safe drinking water, and pasture for pastoralists.

¶3. (U) On October 1, U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) staff reported to USAID that as of the end of August, 109 mm of rain had been recorded in North Darfur. UNICEF staff confirmed continued minimal rain through September. The rainy season in North Darfur typically occurs between late June and the end of September and delivers an average of 150mm of rain. UNICEF staff further noted that for the last two years, North Darfur recorded 250 mm of rain between June and September.

¶4. (U) UNICEF staff noted with alarm that a newly-built water catchment facility, designed to support the water table and serve for non-human water use at Zam Zam Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp, is empty, and nine water pumps in Abu Shouk and Al Salaam IDP camps are dry. Other IDP camps and rural villages have also reported water shortages.

¶5. (U) The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) also met with USAID on October 1 and confirmed the early termination of rains in North Darfur. A post-harvest assessment is due to begin in November, but the latest maps already show a worrying pattern developing across the region. FAO provided seeds and tools to 85,000 households in North Darfur through ten implementing partners in 2009, but is not optimistic about yields because of the rains. FAO also noted that the expulsion of 13 international NGOs in March 2009, following President Bashir's indictment by the International Criminal Court, presented a significant loss of expertise in the agriculture, livestock, and food security sectors.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: While Government of National Unity (GNU) officials and other policymakers have been debating IDP returnee numbers, U.N. field staff in North Darfur predict a significant

water shortage in the coming months, potentially attracting additional populations to urban centers. In North Darfur, the fragile environmental balance, numerous livestock, and likely poor harvest may complicate the humanitarian response for 2010. In addition, competition for scarce resources could trigger clashes between farmers and herders in North Darfur. Humanitarian staff may take a water management role in working with IDPs and host communities to avoid further deterioration of already tense relations. However, African Union-U.N. Hybrid Operations in Darfur (UNAMID) and humanitarian agency presence could place additional pressure on limited water resources in North Darfur. End comment.

WHITEHEAD